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Sculptures of Hindu Divinities



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HERITAGE OF HARYANA -I

SCULPTURES OF HINDU DIVINITIES

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Text : **Madhava Acharya** photographs : V.K. Gupta
Department of Archaeology & Museums, Haryana, Chandigarh.

FOREWORD

Though there are a number of publications on the sculptures of India, very little is known about the sculptures of Haryana. During the last few years the Department of Archaeology & Museums, Haryana has done a lot of work in the discovery and collection of sculptures and antiquities. Indian Sculptures have achieved greatness not only in religion and philosophy, but also in the art and iconographic jargon. These are still a living force in the life of Indian people and exercise a profound influence on the hearts of the art lovers all over the world.

I am happy to see that the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Haryana, has started a series "Heritage of Haryana" to acquaint the people about the cultural, archaeological and historical wealth of the State. The first series 'Sculptures of Hindu Divinities' in hand will throw fresh light on the various ancient schools of art that flourished in the region in the bygone era. I am sure this booklet will be regarded as a valuable addition to the existing literature on this subject and will be welcomed by students and scholars of art and religious history and the general public.

L. M. JAIN
Commissioner & Secretary,
Home, Jails, Criminal Investigation,
Administration of Justice,
Vigilance, Excise & Taxation,
Education, Languages, Archaeology
and Cultural Affairs.

INTRODUCTION

The holy land of Haryana has been a witness to momentous events of historical, cultural and religious importance. It is here that the Vedic sages kindled the sacred fire on the banks of the Sarasvati, Drishadvati and Apaya rivers. It is here that the Rigveda were composed. And it is here that the Bhagvadgita was recited. It has been the venue of the Mahabharata war and many other decisive battles. In the quiet hermitages of Haryana were created literary works of great merit and from its stones were sculpted some of the finest creations of Indian art. It is the cradle of the Harappan as well as Aryan cultures which have left for us a rich artistic legacy.

From the very beginning, man has sensed the nebulous presence of unseen forces active on this earth. These forces, of which nature was the visible manifestation, were seen to be the representatives of some celestial body. From this thought emerged the concept of nature as god. Different aspects of nature, were, therefore, seen and identified as different gods. Major gods out of these were Agni, Vayu, Surya, Vasu, Indra, Vrihaspati, Varun and Ashvins. Among these, Agni, Indra and Surya considered to be the most important, were regarded as terrestrial, atmospheric and celestial deities respectively and therefore in Brahmanic literature, all the deities were categorised on this basis as Vasus, Rudras and Adityas respectively. At about the end of the Vedic age, Vishnu from amongst the Adityas, Shiva from amongst the Rudras and Brahma out of the Vasus acquired more prominence as compared to the others. These three gods constituted the pantheon and were soon converted into lithic form. They were beautifully represented in stone by the artistic hands of the sculptors of historic and early mediaeval times. With the passage of time, these sculptures became the centre of fascinating legends.

The Department of Archaeology and Museums, Haryana, has been making continuous efforts to discover these works of art and thereby bring us palpably closer to the past glory of Haryana. The earliest sculptures found in Haryana were carved about 2000 years ago during the Kushana period. They represent the beliefs and culture of the people of that period and are important to art as well as to religion. In this booklet, an effort has been made to describe some of the more important sculptures in physical detail in terms of technique, elaborate on the beliefs they represented and relate these to the complex artistic and religious influence they exercised. It is, therefore, our endeavour in introducing these sculptures, to evoke a past replete with beauty, artistic perfection and conceptual depth.

ASHA SHARMA
Director
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GANESHA



Ganesha is the elder son of the divine couple Shiva and Parvati. Puranas refer to the myth as to how Ganesha lost his head in an unfortunate accident. It was however, replaced by Shiva with an elephant head. In order to compensate him for his uncommon appearance, he made him a chief of his Ganas. Thus he received the name Ganesha, the Lord of the Ganas.

Being an important deity, the sculptures of Ganesha are very common. This image of Ganesha is made of buff sandstone and was found from Prachi Shiva Temple at Pehowa. The god is seated on a cushioned seat. He is wearing a diademed crown and has three eyes. He holds flower bud or his own tooth, lotus flower, an axe (Parashu) and the bowl of sweet balls in his lower right, upper right, upper left and lower left hands respectively. Two flying Vidyadharas with garlands are shown on either side of his head. A little rat (his vehicle) is depicted near the right foot of the God. On stylistic grounds this graceful sculpture may be attributed to circa 9th century A.D.



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GANESHA & SHAKTI

Ganesha has been regarded as the supreme God in the *Ganesha Purana*. He has been regarded as the great creator (Maha Brahma), the great protector (Maha Vishnu) and the great destroyer (Maha Shiva). The association with Shakti gave him the status of Maha Shakti also. Thus Ganesha became more elevated in status and beneficial to the human beings and was worshipped as an independent God around whom later evolved the *Ganpatya* cult.

This representation of Ganesha with Shakti has been depicted in a medallion on a pillar. This buff sandstone pillar has been collected from Sirsa. Ganesha with Shakti has been beautifully shown in the medallion. The deity is depicted with an elephant head and big belly. He wears a tiara on his head. A snake has been used as belt on his belly. He has four hands. He holds a flower in the back right hand, a trident in the front right hand, a bowl of Sweet balls in the back left hand and with the front left hand he is embracing the goddess. The goddess is seated on his lap. Her face is mutilated. Her right hand is thrown round the neck of the deity in an embrace and the left is broken.

This image, though damaged and carved in limited space, is a beautiful piece of art and may be dated to circa 10-11th century A.D.

BRAHMA

Hindu religion is based on the Trinity or Trimurti i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, of which Brahma is placed first. He, in conception and form, is the source of the **Vedas**, the supreme sacrificer and the creator of the Universe. The four **Vedas** are said to have issued from his four mouths.

This beautiful sculpture of Brahma, in buff sandstone, was found from Prachi Shiva Temple, Pehowa, District Kurukshetra. The god is shown seated on a lotus pedestal. In this relief, only three faces are shown and the fourth one is supposed to be at the back. Among his four hands, lower right is in **abhaya** pose and the upper right and the upper and lower left hold a **Snuk** (ladle), a book and a **Kamandalu** respectively. His vehicle swan is shown near his right leg. Two fire altars with three flames signifying the sacrificial aspect of the god may be seen behind the upper two hands. The god wears a garland, a pearl necklace and a sacred thread.

Exquisite expression, rhythmic flow of lines and the care with which it has been carved make it a masterpiece of Pratihara art. It may be assigned to **circa** 9th century A.D.



VISHNU

Vishnu has been a particularly active and prominent deity since the Vedic times. His supremacy over other gods began to be pronounced in the **Brahmanas** and the **Puranas** and a time came when the prominent heroes of the legends and religious movements were all identified with the incarnation of Vishnu. The main purpose of the incarnation was always the suppression of evil and promotion of good.

This Vishnu icon, made of greyish black sandstone, was found from village Kosli in District Rohtak. Standing on a lotus seat placed on a **Panch-ratha** pedestal, he holds in his four hands clockwise **Shankha**, **Padma**, **Gada** and **Chakra**. Around the main deity, the ten incarnations, viz. Matsya, Kurma, Varaha and Narasimha on the top, Parashurama, Rama and Budha on his right and Vamana, Balrama and Kalki on his left have been depicted. Three minor deities are shown in miniature pillared panels at the top. Below his hands holding **Chakra** and **Shankha**, Shridevi and Garuda are shown as his attendants. Near the feet of Lord Vishnu is the donor couple seated in salutation with folded hands. It is complete figure marked by rigid frontality, profuse jewellery and conventional stiffness. This sculpture can be placed in **circa** 12th century A.D. on the basis of style.

HARI PITAMAHĀ

There are a number of sculptures of Hari-Hara (Vishnu & Shiva) and Hari-Hara-Pitamaha (Vishnu, Shiva & Brahma) and the stories behind the representations have been narrated in the Puranas. But surprisingly not even a single sculpture of this type of Hari-Pitamaha has so far come to the notice of the scholars. It is the first such sculpture which has been acquired by the Department from village Purkhas of District Sonepat. It is made of buff sandstone. The speciality of this sculpture is that it is carved in a round shape and the backs of both the deities are joined to each other. All the hands of both the deities are missing. It is also broken from the basal portion. The halo is common for both the deities and is carved from both the sides which is broken from the top. Vishnu is standing in **abhanga** pose and wears a **Kiritamukuta**, **Yajnopavita**, a necklace and a **dhoti** which is tightened with a waist-band. Brahma or Pitamaha is also standing in the same pose as Vishnu. He is having three faces including a bearded central one. Both the faces on either side are

comparatively smaller and carry the indication of a beard in the form of incised line. The central face is shown with a beautifully ornamented **Jatamukuta**. The god also wears the same ornaments and garments as vishnu. A small fire-altar below his right hand is also shown. On the basis of the remains it can be presumed that both the deities were having a separate group of four hands each.

This beautiful masterpiece may be dated to circa 9th-10th century A.D.



VARAHA

Varaha, finds mention in the Puranas & elsewhere as the third incarnation of Vishnu, in the traditional order of Avatars. The story, in brief, is that Hiranyaksha, an **asura**, one of the two sons of Diti, obtained a boon from Brahma that he would not be hurt by noxious animals. Unable to bear the burden of the excessive evils wrought by this **asura**, the earth sank beneath the waters of the ocean. To save the earth at this critical stage, Vishnu assuming the form of a boar (Varaha), lifted the earth from the depths on his tusk. Then he slew Hiranyaksha. The **asura** had forgotten to include the boar in the list of animals when he obtained the boon from Brahma.

This sculpture representing Varaha, made of greenish sandstone, has been found from Bhima Devi Temple, Pinjore, District Ambala. The prognathism, all the hands and part of legs are completely gone. The deity facing left is standing in alidha pose with the left leg raised and the right stretched. The God wears a crown, **Vanamala**, necklace and **Yajnopavita** and a strap-like waist-band in which a small dagger is tucked. A double-petalled halo behind the head is also shown.

Though this figure represents the usual hybrid form of the God, it is unique in its slender shape, smooth modelling and beautiful decorations. This sculpture may be assigned to 10-11th century A.D. on the basis of its style.



NARASIMHA

Narasimha is the fourth incarnation of Vishnu. The story behind the Avtara is elaborately described in the Puranic texts. Hiranyakashipu, the brother of Hiranyaksha, had received a boon from Brahma after strenuous tapas. The five-fold boon that he desired and obtained was that he should not die at the hands of any being created by Brahma, including the hands of man, beast, gods and asuras, by any weapon, on earth and in heaven during day or night, neither inside nor outside and he should be unequalled by any other being. With all his desires granted, the asura, got about avenging his brother's death by prohibiting the worship of Vishnu. But Prahlad, his son, was an ardent devotee of Vishnu and Hiranyakashipu failed to alter his son's devotion to the god in spite of all his efforts. Ultimately, in an argument he asked Prahlad, whether Vishnu resided in the pillar of the palace and kicked it. The pillar burst and Vishnu in the terrible form of Narasimha (half man and half lion) came out and killed Hiranyakashipu with his claws.

This small buff sandstone sculpture of Narasimha has been collected from Hansi, District Hissar. The Narasimha is shown with four arms. His proper two hands are engaged in tearing the belly of the demon Hiranyakashipu who is lying on his lap. Remaining both the raised hand hold a scarf like object. The deity without any attribute is also interesting. This image may be dated to 7th century A.D.



VAMANA

Vamana is the fifth incarnation of lord Vishnu. In this incarnation, Vishnu reduced himself to a dwarf to chastise the demon Bali, the great grandson of Hiranyakashipu, who had grown troublesome to the gods. Vishnu taking the shape of a dwarf (Vamana) went to Bali and begged for himself three strides of earth which he granted. Thereupon Vishnu covered the whole of earth and sky in two strides and with the third he pushed Bali to the nether regions.

This buff sandstone sculpture to Vamana has been found from Bawal, District Mahendragarh. The god is shown as holding **Padma**, **Gada**, **Chakra** and **Shankha** in his lower right, upper right, upper left and lower left hand respectively. Vamana Vishnu is beautifully decorated with ornaments. Below his lower right and left hands two of his attributes, i.e., **Shankha** and **Chakra** are shown in personified form. To further right and left of these **Ayudha-Purushas**, two female counterparts of Vishnu, Shridevi and Bhudevi are shown with lotus in their hands. A lotiform auriole behind the head highlights the grace of god. On either side of the **Prabhmandal** are Brahma and Shiva shown seated on the right and left respectively indicating the supremacy of lord Vishnu.

It is the only known sculpture of the Vamana form of Vishnu not only from Haryana but the whole northern region including Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. This unique and beautiful sculpture may be assigned to circa 10-11th century A.D.



VIAKUNTHA

Vaikuntha is the most controversial form of Vishnu. Some of the ancient texts relate this form with Indra also. The **Vishnu Purana** says that Vishnu was born of Vikuntha, an Asuri daughter of Prajapati. The **Mahabharata** refers to this form of Vishnu as **Murtichatushtaya**, i.e., four-fold image of Vaikuntha (Vasudeva) Narasimha, Varaha and Kapila. Except in Kashmir, Vaikuntha image from all parts of the country show only three faces, the fourth one at the back can, however, be presumed.

This pinkish buff sandstone sculpture of Vaikuntha Vishnu was found from Prachi Shiva Temple, Pehowa. The deity is standing in Tribhang pose. Three faces of god are visible, the fourth one on the back cannot be seen. The central face is human with a Kilitamukuta in his head. On the right and left are the stylised faces of a lion (simha) and a boar (Varaha). This eight handed deity shows **abhaya** pose. **Chakra**, sword and arrow in his right hands and **Shankha** (Conch-shell) **Gada**, bow (mutilated) and shield in his left hands.

The personified forms of his attributes, **Ayudha Purushas**, **Shankhapurusha** and **Chakrapurusha**, are shown on the right and left sides respectively. Behind the Ayudhapurushas stand two female attendants which are probably **Shri Devi** and **Bhudevi**. At the top, on either side of the head, are shown two flying garland-bearing **Vidyadharas**.

The facial expression and the overall effect gives an impression of serenity and deep concentration. This rare piece of sculpture is datable to 9th century A.D.



YOGA NARAYANA

A variety of new forms of gods and goddesses came into existence during mediaeval times. The deities were shown in a variety of postures. These were worshipped by the devotees with different objectives. The Vaishnava Yogis started worshipping their God in the form of Yoga-Narayana to attain Yoga.

This Yogasana Vishnu or Yoga-Narayana made of buff sandstone has been obtained from Sirsa. The deity, seated in the **Padmasana** pose on a lotus seat in a pillared niche, has four hands. The front two are placed in his lap and back right and left hands hold a mace and a **Padma** (lotus flower) respectively. He is wearing a cylindrical crown **Kiritamukuta**, long garland, ear ornaments etc.

Simplicity and grace are the distinctive features of this sculpture. It can be assigned to the 10th century A.D.



LAKSHAMI-NARAYANA

In this class of images, the goddess Lakshmi is represented sitting on the left thigh of Vishnu. These images are very rare in Haryana. This illustrated icon of Lakshmi-Narayana is made of gray sandstone. It was found from the ruins of the Bhima Devi Temple, Pinjore. Though it is not in a very good state of preservation and the facial expression and other details are not very clear due to the roughness of stone, yet it preserves its basic features. God Narayana is seated probably on a lotus seat with the right leg dangling. He holds **Padma**, **Gada**, **Chakra** and **Shankha** clockwise in his four hands. The normal left hand which holds **Shankha** also encircles Lakshmi and touches her left breast. Goddess Lakshmi is seated in **Sukhasana** on the left thigh of Vishnu (Narayana). Her right hand is placed round the neck of her Lord and the left one holds a lotus. The kneeling two-handed Garuda is depicted below as if supporting the lotus seat on which the pair is seated. On the receding recesses on both sides stand the female fly-whiskers in pillared panels. This interesting and rare sculpture, though mutilated, is assignable to circa 10-11th century A.D.

HARI-HARA

The image of Hari-Hara is the combination of two great gods Vishnu (Hari) and Shiva (Hara). The purpose of the fusion has been narrated in the *Purana* in an interesting story according to which Vishnu adopted the form of a beautiful maiden Mohini, for distributing the nectar (Amrit) between gods and demons. Shiva loved that form and embraced her. This syncretic icon also signifies the fusion of the two major cults of Vaisnavism and Shaivism.

The present image of Harihara, made of buff sandstone, has been found from Village Beri of Distt. Rohtak. In this image the left half represents Vishnu and the right half represents Shiva. Vishnu has been shown with a *Kiritamukuta* (Vishnu) and Shiva with a *Jata Mukta*. The upper and lower hands of Vishnu hold *Chakra* and *Shankha* and Shiva holds a trident and a flower. A snake is shown coiled on the trident. The vehicles Garuda and Nandi (Bull) of Vishnu and Shiva are shown on the sides of their respective Lords. Two attendants, one male and one female, are shown on either side. These attendants may be recognised as Padmapurusha and Shridevi and Trishula Purusha and Parvati, at the sides of Vishnu and Shiva respectively. A beautifully ornamented lotus—petalled halo is carved behind the head of the deity. Brahma and Surya have been shown seated on the lotus cushioned seat on either side of the halo. Harihara is standing on a lotus pedestal.

This composite form of Shiva and Vishnu, Harihara, symbolises the ultimate unity of time and space, Shiva representing time (*Mahakala*) and Vishnu representing space.

This beautiful and well preserved sculpture is datable to 10—11th century A.D.



SHESHASHAYI VISHNU

Vishnu, the protector of universe, is represented in different forms during mediaeval times. This form of the god is shown in reclining pose on the Shesa Naga (a mythical snake). **Mahabharata** describes that the Vishnu had to assume this form within the sea at the end of **Pralaya** (the great flood). Traditionally it is also believed that the god rests on the snake for four months from Shravana to Kartik every year.

The present grey sandstone image of Sheshashayi Vishnu has been collected from village chhota Madana of Distt. Ambala. The Vishnu is shown lying with slightly raised body over the seven hooded Shesa who has canopied him. The hood is partially damaged. Four handed Vishnu holds Chakra and Shankha in his left hands whereas upper right hand is supporting his head and lower right hand is resting on chest. Mace, the third attribute of Vishnu, is kept near his head. His left leg is bent whereas the right is stretched and is held by Lakshmi. The god is shown with usual ornaments. The image of Brahma is completely gone, who is to be seated on lotus flower issuing from the navel of Vishnu. It is interesting to note that the stalk immerses from the background of the deity in this sculpture, not from the navel as described in the texts. Two male dancing figure Madhu & Kaitabha are shown towards the left of the lotus-stalk. Nine plants were also carved on the top of the panel but only seven are left at present. Stylistically this sculpture may be placed in circa 10—11th century A.D.



MUKHA LINGA

Shiva is one of the most popular and important deities in India. He is mentioned as Rudra in the **Rigveda** where he has a subordinate position. Gradually, in other **Vedas**, **Brahmanas** and **Upanishads**, he acquired a higher status and different epithets. But the personality of Rudra was fully developed in the **Puranas**. Shiva is represented in aniconic and anthropomorphic forms in the sculptures. Aniconic representation is in the form of Lingas which may be either plain or with one or more faces. The antiquity of Linga worship goes back to Harappan age. But the **Ekamukh Linga** worship has gained more popularity during the Gupta period.

This red sandstone sculpture was found from village Gujjar Kheri in District Sonepat. Upper and lower portions of the Linga are broken and only its head remains. The locks of hair are styled in the **Jatamukuta** fashion. The god is shown with a moustache and with three eyes including the one on his forehead. Below his horizontally placed third eye an Urna is also shown. The nose is partly damaged.

The smiling and graceful face, half closed eyes and elongated ears combine to present a divine effect. Which is at the sametime somewhat inspiring. Stylistically the sculpture may be dated to circa 5th century A.D.



NATARAJA

Images of Shiva in the Dancing pose, of Nataraja, are very interesting specimens of Indian Art. Nataraja means the Supreme Dancer. In this form, lord Shiva is shown performing the Tandava Dance. These images are very popular in southern India, but in the north these are very rare.

The present image of Shiva comes from Rohtak. The image is made of brown micaceous sandstone. The god is standing on his slightly bent left leg with his right leg lifted upward. The four-handed god holds a trident and a snake in his upper right and left hands respectively. His normal right hand is shown in abhaya pose whereas the left is shown stretched fully downward near his uplifted right leg. To express the force and rhythm in dance the garland and the snake are swinging to left and right respectively. Only two attendants are shown near the feet of the god. The Bull (Nandi) seated on its hind legs and plying the drum with his forelegs is on the right. On the left is another figure, playing probably kartikeya on a flute.

Generally an Apasmarapurusha, a man like demon, representing darkness is also shown beneath the legs of the god, but he is absent here. This being a badly mutilated sculpture, the facial expressions are not very clear. The overall impression is clearly representative of the grace and rhythm of the dance.

This masterpiece is about thirteen hundred years old.



TRIMURTI SHIVA

The depiction of Shiva with three faces is an interesting, but controversial one. The famous Trimurti relief at Elephanta has attracted the attention of scholars and laity. Some of the scholars hold the view that these three faces represent Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in a composite form, and some regard them as different forms of Shiva himself. The central idea of the Trimurti may have been to depict Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram as a god in a composite manner. One of these three faces represents Shiva as Rudra, the lord of Death, Death that is true (Satyam). The central figure is that of Shiva. It represents goodness (Shivam). The third is that of Parvati, Symbol of beauty (Sundaram).

Though this piece of sculpture, in greenish sandstone, is badly mutilated and the facial expressions and other details are not clearly visible, yet its artistic and historical importance cannot be ignored. It was found from Mori Ka Tal, District Ambala. This three-faced and two-handed deity is shown in a standing pose. The right hand is raised in abhaya mudra and the left hand holds a fruit (Bilvaphala). He is accompanied by four attendants, two on the left and two on the right sides. The first figure at the right is that of a bull in personified form. Another at the right, probably Kartikeya, is badly damaged. The two male attendants at the left are also in the same posture. All the four attendants are shown in abhaya mudra.

The simplicity of depiction and sparse ornamentation add a peculiar grace to this image, ascribable to the early mediaeval period (11—12th cent. A.D.).

UMA-MAHESVARA

Uma—Maheshvara is the popular depiction of Shiva in Indian Art. The god in this form has been worshipped from very ancient times. Different iconographical texts give different descriptions. The *Matsya purana* gives detailed directions as to how Uma—Maheshvara images should be made.

This illustrated image, obtained from village Beri, Distt. Rohtak, is the best example of the description of the above mentioned text. The god is represented sitting on his mount, a bull, with the pendent right leg resting on a lotus. His wife Uma (Parvati) sits on his left thigh. Her left leg is slightly folded and is placed on a lotus which rests on the back of the Bull. Four-handed Shiva holds Nilotpala and trident in his right hand, a three headed cobra is held in his rear left hand while the normal left hand clasps the breast of the goddess. The goddess embraces Shiva by encircling her right hand around his neck. She holds a mirror in the left hand. Two sons of this divine couple, Ganesha and Kartikeya, are shown on the right and left respectively near their feet. Just above Ganesha and Kartikeya

Trishulapurusha, a personified form of his attribute Trishula, and Yama have been shown. It is very interesting to note that Yama is shown as an attendant of Shiva in this sculpture. The skeleton-like Bhringi Rishi is dancing in the centre below the bull. A bowl of sweetmeats have been shown offered near the right leg of Shiva. A full bloomed lotus petalled prabhmandala is shown behind the head of the god. On either side of the halo, Brahma and Vishnu are shown seated. Two of these are holding garlands and the remaining two jointly hold a Jatamukuta, the crown of Shiva.

This sculpture may be assigned to circa 10th century A.D.



KARTIKEYA

The god Kartikeya or Skanda is the second son of the divine couple Shiva and Parvati. He is known as Shadanana also because of his six faces. He is the Commander-in-chief of the divine army and is regarded as the god of war. The earliest image of Kartikeya, with a single head and two arms, dated back to circa 1st century A.D. His representation as Shadanana in stone, however, became more popular in the mediaeval period.

This masterpiece of Pratihara art in buff sandstone has been found from Gujjar Kheri, Sonepat. In this sculpture, Kartikeya has six faces, the main central face being encircled by five smaller ones. The god sits in the **maharajalila** posture on the back of his vehicle, the peacock. He holds the cock in his right and spear in his left hand. A plain round **prabhamandala** is shown behind his heads. The sculpture may be dated to circa 9th century A.D.



Another beautiful sculpture of Kartikeya has been found from Khokrakot, Rohtak. It is made of brown sandstone. With a little difference in the exchange of attributes in the hands, it is very similar to that of the previous one. It has the same attributes and other iconographic features. This sculpture depicts six headed Kartikeya seated on his mound peacock in **ardhaparyankasana** pose. He is having two arms and holds a spear in his right and a cock in the left hand. His heads are arranged in two rows, each consisting of three heads. The central head in the lower row is the biggest of all and represents the main head. He is wearing a **Jatamukuta**, **Vanamala**, sacred thread, necklace and ear ornaments.

It may be assigned to the 8th century A.D.

SURYA

Since time immemorial Surya (Sun god) has occupied a remarkable position in religion throughout the world. He was regarded as an important deity during Rigvedic time. After the emergence of the Trinity in Hindu pantheon he became a secondary god. The anthropomorphic representation of sun in sculptures started from the Mauryan times with indigenous character. Later on, the sculptures were influenced by foreign elements which, in some way or the other, prevailed in the images of Surya down the ages in northern India.

Numerous images of Surya have been found from Haryana. This illustrated image is made of buff sandstone and was discovered from village Beri of district Rohtak. The god stands in contraposts on a lotus pedestal, holding two full bloomed lotuses in his two hands which rise just above his shoulders. His head is surrounded by a lotus flower halo. His body is covered with armour and other ornaments. His feet and legs are covered with high boots, a peculiar feature of the sun god only. A miniature female deity, Mahashveta, stand at the feet of the god with a pot in her left hand and her right hand raised for abhaya (Protection). The photos on the top corner show Brahma and Vishnu seated on lotus pedestals. Below these gods, Usha and Pratyusha have been shown shooting arrows from their bows, signifying the dispelling the darkness. On either side near the feet, stand Danda and Pingala followed by Chhaya and Suvarcha and Ashvins. On stylistic ground this beautiful sculpture may be attributed to circa 10—11th century A.D.



Another grey sandstone image of Surya has been found from Pehowa, Distt. Kurukshetra. In this sculpture Surya is shown seated on a cushioned seat in a chariot. At present only three out of seven horses of his chariot remain. Other four horses along with the lame charioteer, Aruna, are missing. The face and the left hand of Surya are completely gone and the right hand with the lotus is partially damaged. Surya wears an armour and ear ornaments. A scarf is also hanging from his hands. Two of his attendants can be seen in the extant relief. Pingala holding paper and a pen and Danda holding a rod are shown seated to his right and left respectively. The partially preserved figure, seated towards the extreme left in the panel and shown in Varada pose, is probably that of Ashvini Kumara. This sculpture may be dated to circa 10th century A.D. on the basis of style.



MAHISHASURAMARDINI

Mahishasuramardini, a popular form of Durga, is one of the most popular goddesses of the Shakti cult in India. She obtained this particular form when gods evoked her aid against the terror of the demon Mahisha, who had occupied the three worlds. To prevail upon the demon, all the gods concentrated their energies, transformed these into a female form and succeeded in killing the Mahishasura. Therefore, this form of the goddess is called Mahishasuramardini.

This image of Mahishasuramardini in buff sandstone, has been found from Sirsa. The eight-armed goddess is shown in the act of killing the demon Mahisha. She wears a necklace, ear ornaments, bracelets, armlets and a dhoti secured by a waist-band. The deity stands diagonally against the back slab putting her right foot on the back of the buffalo (Mahisha) and the left planted firmly on the ground. She holds the anthropomorphic demon coming out of the severed head of the buffalo with her proper left hand and pierces the back of the buffalo with a trident held in her proper right hand. Other hands hold anti-clockwise bow, bell, shield, sword, disc and arrows. Lion, the mount of the goddess, is depicted on the right as if attacking the demon from behind.

It is a remarkable piece on the basis of its style & composition. It is representative of the Pratihara art of north India and may be dated to circa 10th century A.D.



BRAHMANI

Brahmani is one of the seven mothers of Saptamatrikas. **Varaha Purana** mentions eight Matrikas instead of seven and adds one Matrika Yogeshvari. It states that these Matrikas represent eight bad mental qualities, i.e., pride, anger, illusion, covetousness, fault finding, envy, tale-bearing and desire. Among these, Brahmani represents desire. Other Puranas mention only seven Matrikas. But they are, one way or the other, associated with the story of killing **Andhakasura** by Shiva. Generally they are shown in a group flanked by Virabhadra Shiva and Ganesha. Some times, however, they are carved independently also.

This greenish sandstone sculpture of Brahmani has been obtained from Pinjore, District Ambala. The goddess is shown standing in **abhanga mudra** in a pillared niche. She wears Jatamukuta necklace, armlets, anklets, girdle and Kundalas. She has four hands. Her lower right hand is shown in **Varadamudra** and she holds a laddle (a spoon like wooden object), book and **Kamandalu** in here upper right, upper left and lower left hands respectively.

Though badly damaged, yet it is an important specimen of the decadent Gurjar Pratihar art of the early 12th century A.D.



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BBG

EKANAMSHA

Ekanamsha is the daughter of Yashoda and the sister of Balarama. She was exchanged with Krishna to save his life from Kansa by his father Vasudeva. She came to be known as Ekanamsha because she was born of one part (Eka-amsha) of Vishnu. Sometimes she is also associated with Subhadra, the sister of Krishna and Balarama. The description of Ekanamsha in **Sabha Parva** of the **Mahabharata** fully tallies with her this sculptural representations. Her earliest images were carved during the Kushana period and it is interesting to note that only a few sculptures of this period have so far been found from the Indian subcontinent.

This Ekanamsha panel has been found from village Sanghel in Distt. Gurgaon. It is made of white-spotted red sandstone. It depicts Ekanamsha with Balarama and Krishna. All the three deities are standing in **samabhanga** pose. The short two handed female deity in the centre can be identified with Ekanamsha. Her right hand is shown in **abhaya** pose and left akimbo. A canopy is arched over her head. On the right of the goddess stands the four handed Balarama. He is shown with a crown and holds **Musala** (pestle) and **Hala** (plough) surmounted by a small lion in his upper right and left hands respectively. The natural right hand is in **abhaya mudra** while the natural left hand holding a wine flask rests at his waist. On her left, Krishna is shown standing in a similar pose. His head and upper two hands are broken. It is no longer possible to determine as to what emblems were carried in both these hands. His lower right hand is shown in **abhaya** pose while the lower left holding a nectar jar (?) is shown **katihasta** (akimbo).

It is the first sculpture of the early Ekanamsha tradition of Kushana period of first century A.D. recovered from Haryana.

GARUDA



Garuda is the *Vahana* (Vehicle) of lord Vishnu. *Adiparva* of the *Mahabharata* states that he was the son of Kashyapa and Vinata and was the younger brother of Aruna, the lame charioteer of Surya, the Sun God. The *Puranas* and other ancient texts describe the iconographic features of Garuda. He is either sculptured with Vishnu or independently, in a winged human form with round eyes and beak-like nose.

This independent sculpture of Garuda, damaged and mutilated, is made of brown banded buff sandstone and has been discovered from village Sagwan in District Bhiwani. Here, Garuda is shown in a flying stance. He is holding a snake in his left hand whereas the right is broken. A small wing is also visible behind the left hand. His head is adorned with curled umbrella like hachs and he wears ornaments in the ears and neck. Facial expressions and other details are not very clear because of its damaged condition.

Though deplorably damaged, yet its artistic beauty and sculptural individuality prove it to be a good example of Indian plastic art, it may be ascribed to *circa* 9th century A.D.



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AGNI

Agni is one of the **Astadikpalas** and the lord of South-east direction. Dikpala means regent or guardian god of half quarter of the sky. **Rigveda** describes Agni as the priest of gods. The **Puranas** give a detailed account of the various aspects of Agni's personality, functions etc. Sculptures of Agni were not prepared for worship generally but were placed on the south-eastern portion of the outer wall of the temple during the medieval period. Early images of Agni owe their origin to the Yaksha images perhaps.

This Agni figure, made of grey sandstone, was found from Bhima Devi temple, Pinjore. Agni is shown standing in **abhangā** pose. He has a long knotted beard. He wears a necklace, sacred thread, a **Vanamala**, armlets, bracelets etc. His lower garment 'dhoti' is supported by a waist-band. In his four arms he holds clockwise, **Akshamala**, Spear, flower and **Kamandalu**. His halo is shown in the form of flames behind his head. Goat, the vehicle of the god, is standing near his right foot. Two female attendants, one on either side, are shown in pillared niches. The one on the left of the god is turned backwards and supports a child in her left arm. The graceful frontality and elongation are the notable features of the image. This sculpture may be dated to 10th century A.D.



YAMA

Yama has been considered to be an important god from very ancient times. Puranas give detailed accounts of the importance of the god. He is the lord of the pitaras (manes) and has been identified with Danda and Dharama. Yama is also well-known as one of the Astadikapalas. He is the lord of the South and is the god of Death.

This Yama statue has been collected from Sirsa. It is made of buff sandstone. Image of the Dikpala is shown standing in a pillared niche. Yama holds a Khatvang in his right hand. The left hand is missing. The mount of Yama, buffalo is shown standing at the back. The head of the buffalo is completely gone. Yama is wearing a crown, Kundalas as ear ornament, necklace, sacred thread, armlets and waistband. A thin lower garment with a few folds is also visible. Though this sculpture is damaged and has a mutilated face, yet it represents the beautiful artistic sense of Pratihaara sculptures and may be dated back to 10th century A.D.



KUBERA

Kubera, the chief of the Yakshas is regarded as a god of wealth. He is one of the Astadikapalas and the guardian god of the Northern region. According to the Mahabharata he is the son of Vishravana and Idavida and grandson of Pulasty. Beside Hinduism he has gained a considerable position in Buddhism and Jainism also.

The present image of Kubera is made of buff sandstone and found from Sirsa. He is seated in Ardhaparyankasana with his left leg doubled and the right pendent resting on the ground. He holds a wine-cup in his right hand and Nakulaka in his left. He wears Karandamukuta, necklace and ear-rings. An ornamented halo is shown behind his head. Like other sculptures of early mediaeval period of the deity found from elsewhere he is shown without his mount.

This crude and unfinished sculpture may be assigned to circa 8th century A.D.

ISHANA

Ishana a form of Shiva, is one of the eight Dikpalas basically. Dikpala means regent or guardian god of half quarter of the sky. He is the Lord of North-east direction. The *Vishnu Dharamottara Purana* suggests that the images of Ishana should be made like Ardhanarishvara i.e. half portion of the body should be that of Shiva and half of Parvati. But the accounts presented by *Agni Purana*, *Matsya Purana*, tallies with this present sculpture.

This present sculpture of Ishana, in the central pillared niche with two female attendants has been obtained from Bhima Devi Temple, Pinjore. It is made of grey sandstone. The four handed deity is shown in a standing pose, holding a trident in upper right hand, a snake in upper left hand and a Kamandalu, i.e., water vessel in lower left hand. The lower right hand is damaged but it seems to have held a rosary. Adorned with a beautiful Jatamukta, he wears necklaces, armlets, waist-band, a sacred thread and a long garland, Vanamala. His vehicle Nandi (bull) is shown standing near the right leg. He is looking upwards towards his master. Two female attendants holding a lotus in one of their hands are shown standing on either side in the pillared niches. The second pralamba hand is shown as holding the free end of the scarf. Like Agni's icon described above this image, too, shows elongation and frontality. This sculpture may be assigned to circa 10th century A.D.



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